

**TOP SECRET**  
Security Information

3 April 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT CHIEF, POLITICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE  
SUBJECT: Comments on PSB D-40: PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION  
OF STALIN'S DEATH

1. The most serious criticism to make is that a paper of this sort tends to be out-dated by events. In this particular case subsequent events may invalidate some of the assumptions upon which the paper is based. For example, the present careful orchestration of Soviet "peace" maneuvers raises some question as to the assumed "condition of nervousness following the sudden transfer of power" (page 10, 5f (1)(3)).

2. By the same token, the explicit and implicit assumption underlying the entire paper, to the effect that the United States possesses the initiative, tends to be vitiated by recent developments in Soviet policy. It is technically true, as a White House spokesman recently stated, that the Soviet Union is now only reacting to proposals which the United States has made at earlier periods. It is also true, however, that the recent carefully coordinated set of Soviet responses creates a wholly new situation at the present time. The authors of the paper could not have been expected to foresee this development, much less to prepare a general plan of action designed to cope with it.

3. Apart from this major criticism, which is not directed against the authors of the paper, but merely underlines the inherent limitations of any effort to forecast the future, it would be out of place to criticize any particular details. The general "strategic concept" appears to be fundamentally sound, and the plan for "covert operations" is likewise based on sound principles, specifically by emphasizing inducement of defections and the sowing of confusion and uncertainty in the ranks of the Communist parties. This section is very properly brief (scarcely over 1 page) and appropriately limited merely to a general statement of principles. The much longer section on "overt information operations" is not properly within the jurisdiction of this office to discuss.

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